

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. NICKLES. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period for morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE MOTOR SAFETY DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, section 344 of the National Highway System Designation Act of 1995 required the Department of Transportation to implement a motor carrier regulatory relief and safety demonstration project. The purpose of this project was to determine whether certain motor carriers with exemplary safety records could operate safely with fewer regulatory burdens.

Specifically, the Department was required to establish a pilot program for operators of vehicles between 10,001 and 26,000 pounds, under which eligible drivers, vehicles, and carriers would be exempt from some of the Federal motor carrier safety regulations.

The safety data generated from this project was to serve as the basis for assessing the appropriate level of future safety regulation for the motor carrier industry.

The statute was clear. Section 344 required the Department of Transportation to ensure that participants in the project would be "subject to a minimum of paperwork and regulatory burdens necessary to ensure compliance with the requirements of the program" and to "represent a broad cross section of fleet size and drivers of eligible vehicles".

Mr. President, I would inquire of the Majority Leader, what is the status of the motor carrier regulatory relief and safety demonstration project which we mandated in 1995?

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I thank the Senator for raising this issue. The letter and intent of the law concerning this program are not being carried out at all.

The National Highway System Designation Act passed in 1995, and section 344 mandated the motor carrier regulatory relief and safety demonstration project. It required the Department of Transportation to implement this project no later than August, 1996. However, the Department of Transportation did not even publish Final Guidelines for the project until June 10 of this year—1 year later than required by law.

Mr. DORGAN. I am, to be honest, somewhat taken aback by the Department of Transportation's obvious delay in implementing a congressionally mandated program. And I understand that delay is not the only problem afflicting this program.

The Final Guidelines, only published this year, appear to fall far short of what was intended in section 334, both in terms of reducing paperwork and regulatory burdens and attracting a broad cross section of participating businesses. Potential business participants invested many months of effort attempting to work with the Department of Transportation to create a functional program. However, the Department's Final Guidelines still create unreasonable barriers to motor carrier participation, produce uncertainty in implementation and enforcement, and fail to reduce business paperwork.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I would add that, at this time, there is not a single applicant for the motor safety demonstration project.

This has not kept the Department from heralding the project as a centerpiece of their so-called regulatory reform. For example, in the August 11, 1997 issue, of the industry publication "Transport Topics," the Department's Associate Administrator for Motor Carriers, George Reagle, referred to the project as a key part of the administration's effort to "provide common-sense government * * *" which offers "the opportunity to further regulatory reform". Mr. Reagle further stated that "This early step toward reform will set the tone for our entire regulatory future * * *".

A centerpiece with no participants is an empty centerpiece. Words of self-praise are an inadequate response. The law was clear and implementation is overdue.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, it seems to me that if there has not been a single participant in this program—which was intended as a way to relieve the regulatory burden on those companies that have demonstrated a good safety record—then something is amiss with this program.

I would hope that the Department would take a second look at this program and give serious consideration to making some changes that will permit the program to work in the manner in which Congress intended. It is clear that Congress desired to establish a means to achieve some regulatory relief and, thus far, we have not seen that result.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I fully agree with the Senator. I do not believe the Department has followed the provisions established under the National Highway System Designation Act. I am disappointed.

The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation has been working to advance legislation expanding the Department of Transportation's use of pilot programs and regulatory exemptions. I will be working with the committee to help reduce, as much as is safely possible, some of the unnecessary regulations and paperwork imposed on the motor carrier industry.

Given the Department's handling of the motor safety demonstration project to date, I am very concerned

about the Department's sincerity in implementing such legislatively mandated programs. I will also be working very closely with the committee to ensure that the mandates we have already passed are complied with by the Department of Transportation.

AMERICAN MANUFACTURING AT ITS BEST

Mr. FORD. Mr. President, today I rise to pay tribute to the Paducah gaseous diffusion plant [PGDP] in Paducah, KY. On October 20, 1997, Industry Week Magazine recognized the Paducah facility as one of "America's 10 Best Plants" from among 275 plants nominated for the honor in 1997.

According to Industry Week, a national publication which annually salutes the top performing manufacturing facilities in North America, the dual purposes of the competition are "to recognize plants that are on the leading edge of North American efforts to increase competitiveness, enhance customer satisfaction, and create stimulating and rewarding work environments; and, to encourage other North American managers and work teams to emulate the honorees by adopting world-class practices, technologies, and improvement strategies."

There is no question that the Paducah facility, a federally owned nuclear fuel enrichment plant managed by Lockheed Martin Utility Services, meets these criteria. In fact, it is a model for any manufacturing plant in any industry in the country. Over the past 10 years, the Paducah plant has nearly tripled output from 2.3 million units per year to 6.8 million units per year. And this amazing increase in productivity was achieved using existing equipment and machinery. Similarly, the percentage of production units in-line has risen from 57 percent of capacity in August 1993, to an impressive 96.9 percent in April 1997. To top it all off, the Paducah facility boasts 100 percent on-time delivery for the past 5 years with a zero product defect rate. Now that, Mr. President, is what quality American manufacturing is all about.

On July 25, the Clinton administration gave formal approval to move forward with privatization for the U.S. Enrichment Corporation [USEC], the Government entity that currently owns PGDP. Hopefully, this process will be completed early in 1998. As I have maintained for the better part of 10 years, privatization will not only enable Paducah to utilize cutting edge technologies to keep it competitive in the world uranium market, it will also keep thousands of productive employees on the job well into the next century.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the article entitled "Lockheed Martin Utility Services" be printed in the RECORD following my remarks.

There being no objection, the article was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows: